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REAGAN UPDATE BY HELEN THOMAS ITEM NO. 2

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA (UPI) -- PRESIDENT REAGAN, OPENING A DAY OF TALKS WITH THE LEADERS OF COSTA RICA, HONDURAS AND GUATEMALA, DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE SATURDAY OF A REPORT THAT AT LEAST 150 CIA AGENTS ARE IN HONDURAS TO MOUNT A PARAMILITARY OPERATION AGAINST NICARAGUA.

REAGAN STARTED THE LAST DAY OF HIS FOUR-NATION TOUR OF LATIN AMERICA BY MEETING WITH COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT ALBERTO LUIS MONGE AT THE CASA PRESIDENCIAL AND SIGNING A TREATY ON EXTRADITION IN A CEREMONY AT THE TEATRO NACIONAL.

BEFORE FLYING BACK TO WASHINGTON TONIGHT, REAGAN WILL MAKE A STOP IN HONDURAS FOR MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENTS ROBERTO SUAZO CORDOVA OF HONDURAS AND PRESIDENT EFRAIN RIOS MONTT OF GUATEMALA.

ASKED AS HE ARRIVED AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE ABOUT THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORT OF COVERT CIA OPERATIONS TO OVERTURN NICARAGUA'S LEFTIST SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT, REAGAN TOLD REPORTERS:

"I NEVER DISCUSS MATTERS OF NATIONAL SECURITY OR THINGS OF THAT KIND."

THE PRESIDENT SAID HE COULD NOT CONFIRM THE REPORT AND ADDED, "I DOUBT IF THE NEW YORK TIMES CAN."

PRESSED FURTHER, HE SAID, "I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY GET SUCH IDEAS."

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION, WHICH ACCUSES THE SANDINISTS OF HELPING CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION TO SPREAD INSURGENCY THROUGH CENTRAL AMERICA, HAS CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO DISCUSS REPORTS IT IS SEEKING TO DESTABILIZE THE LEFTIST REGIME.

THE TIMES SAID THE CIA'S OPERATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA HAVE GROWN INTO ITS "MOST AMBITIOUS PARAMILITARY AND POLITICAL ACTION OPERATION" IN NEARLY A DECADE.

IN ADDITION TO MORE THAN 150 AGENTS IN HONDURAS, DOZENS OF OTHERS ARE STATIONED IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, THE TIMES SAID, QUOTING INTELLIGENCE SOURCES. FEWER THAN A DOZEN WERE ASSIGNED TO THE AREA A YEAR AGO, IT SAID.

OFFICIALS IN HONDURAS AND WASHINGTON TOLD THE TIMES THE CIA HAS BEEN INDIRECTLY PROVIDING MONEY, TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT TO PARAMILITARY GROUPS SEEKING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT IN NICARAGUA.

REAGAN'S MEETINGS WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN LEADERS CENTERS ON WAYS TO COUNTER LEFTIST INSURGENCIES.

MONGE IS THE LEADER IN CENTRAL AMERICA IN PROMOTING A PEACE PLAN, BACKED BY REAGAN, THAT CALLS FOR A WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN MILITARY ADVISERSOAR A WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN MILITARY ADVISERS AND A LIMIT ON HEAVY OFFENSIVE WEAPONS.

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